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Chapter 17
Urban Futures
Simin Davoudi

1. Peter Hall: A futurist historian

Back in 1982, I thought I had seen what the city would look like in 2019. It was a dark place, with flickering neon signs, spinning spotlights, and flying police cars racing between skyscrapers. People were eating noodles bought from Chinese street markets in the rain, and everyone was keeping an eye on genetically-engineered androids from an off-planet colony. Some 24 years later, it turned out that apart from eating noodles and the rain, the future wasn't going to be Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*. Instead, we were told that the future was about blue sky, cycling, greeneries, recycling, and renewable energies¹. It was going to be about 'smart, responsive simplicity' according to Peter Head, Director of Arup, when he launched the Dongtan City project in Shanghai. That was 2006. Today, the project is on halt and even if it wasn't, would Dongtan be a realistic model of urban future? If not, what would be? One person who has tried tirelessly to find out is Sir Peter Hall whom I first met in 1996 and had the privilege of working with and enjoying his support ever since.

Peter Hall is one of those rare scholars of planning history who have the ability to look into the past and see the future. One of his most celebrated books about planning history is ironically called *Cities of Tomorrow*. It is true that the title of the book was inspired by Ebenezer Howard's *Garden Cities of Tomorrow* but, there is more to it than a mere inspiration. The title and the text reflect Peter's mastery of combining insight with foresight. As the review by the *Times Higher Education Supplement* put it:

'What is really important about this book is Hall's capacity to tap into our *current* pre-occupations, and it is his understanding of *the present* which will make readers interested in his interpretations of the past' (Hall, 1994, back cover, emphasis added).

And, that is not all. It is also his perspective on the *future* which makes his interpretation of history a rewarding experience for the readers. Peter is as much a futurist as an historian, and there is as much future thinking in his account of urban history as there is in his publications that carry the term 'future' in their title. Despite this, in writing this chapter I duly followed the editors' instruction and focused only on the latter. This by no means reduced the scope of the task or the workload because there are no fewer than

26 papers in that category. The first one was written in 1966 and published in 1972 on *The Pattern of Cities to Come* (Hall, 1972) and the latest – though not necessarily the last- one was published in 2008 on *Key Issues for Planning Futures and the Way Forward* (Davoudi et al, 2008). The papers can be grouped into 2 broad categories: cities *in* the future and future *of* 'the city'. I elaborate on these in sections 3 and 4 of this chapter after a brief discussion of imagining urban futures in section 2. The final section (section 5) outlines the emerging paradigm in futures thinking.

Seeing the future from the past

Reading through Peter's papers, particularly the earlier publications, is an unusual time-travel experience because the future is presented from the past. What is portrayed as an unknown future at the time of writing becomes a known history at the time of reading. It is, therefore, tempting to map Peter's predictions against today's realities. One of my favourites is a 1971 article in which Peter describes a Post Office exhibit of a mock-up of a civil engineer at work in his office of the 1990s as follows:

The engineer 'sits in a luxurious office in his own country home. He communicates instantly with other professionals [...], using a bewildering variety of devices: the video-phone (Skype), the data transmission link (Internet), the computer display with light pen (touch screen), the cordless telephone (iPhone). He eliminates commuting. The home has become the workplace.' (Hall, 1971:175, words in brackets are added)

Apart from 'eliminating commuting', this example, like many others, demonstrates how farsighted some of Peter's future visions are but, that is not really the point. The point is that it takes a great deal of courage and integrity to speculate about what the future city looks like and even more so to suggest what it should look like. Peter, like other great visionaries before him, has done both.

3. Imagining urban futures

'The desire to peer into the future is a human trait as old as the Biblical prophets and the oracle at Delphi. And the desire to project *urban* futures is at least as old as Plato's description of the ideal city-state in *The Republic*' (Le Gates and Stout, 2003: 467)

However, both the pace of futurist activities and the perceptions of the future have changed over time. For the pre-industrial societies future was at the mercy of the Divine

forces and thus could only be known through Delphi's prophecy. The Enlightenment was to change that by freeing the future from the constraints of divinity and nature and by making it subject to human domination. In its perceived clockwork universe, science was to replace God in determining the future. The antidote to future uncertainties and the insurance against its contingencies was prediction and planning (Luhmann, 1982). Armed with the science of the probable, futurist activities flourished after the industrial revolution. At the same time, the rapid urbanisation of the 19th century triggered a wave of urban visioning. Indeed, 'the greatest period of visionary idealism in which physical designs for ideal cities were pronounced dates from approximately 1880 to 1940' (Hall, 1983:190). A period in which great utopias were born which had a more obsessive quality' (ibid: 189) related to 'a desired ideal state' (ibid: 190) than their contemporary planning ideas. Among them those that became widely known and influential were: Ebenezer Howard's garden city (*Garden Cities of Tomorrow*), Le Corbusier's radiant city (*La Ville radieuse*), Frank Lloyd Wright's suburban city (*Broadacre City*), and the Charter of Athens' functional city.

These physically-based and socially-oriented utopian visions were the first wave of the 20th century urban futurism. We are now witnessing a second wave. Like their predecessors, the contemporary visionary idealism has been triggered by major societal changes of which two are particularly powerful. The first one is similar to what drove the first wave of urban utopias. It is the rapid pace of urbanisation and the challenge of metropolitan organisation. However, this time it is happening in the developing countries which are urbanising even faster than the industrial nations did at the heydays of their urban growth. It took London 130 years to reach a population of 8 Million. Mexico City did that in 30 years. At China's current rate of construction, Rome can be built not in one day but certainly in two weeks. It took only a decade (1999-2010) for China to build the equivalent of Europe's entire housing stock (The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited, 2011). This unprecedented rate of urbanisation has been associated with the all too familiar social and environmental problems. A third of urban population in developing countries live in slums. Across the world, this amounts to over one billion people who have no access to: clear water, sanitation, infrastructure, health services, safety and security (The UN Global Report, 2009). They live in 'cities of dreadful nights' (Hall, 1994:13) as did the urban poor in the 19th century cities of industrial countries which are at the centre of Peter Hall's early writings on urban futures.

The second driver of the current surge in visionary idealism is climate change which marks a major shift in the normative visions of urban future with the emphasis being less on social and more on environmental concerns. Although environment played a part

in earlier utopias, it was largely limited to the concerns over the protection of the countryside from urban sprawl, or the merging of the best of the town with the best of the country, or the improvement of local amenities. De-carbonisation was not on the agenda of the early 20th century visionaries, neither was it on the agenda of the scientists. The only exception was an English steam engineer called Guy Callendar who was seen by the rest of the scientific community as an eccentric. Thus, his 1938 carbon dioxide theory of climate change remained in the intellectual oblivion for few decades (Davoudi, 2009). Today, no urban futurism is complete without a vision of the zero-carbon cities. Some are pure fantasies such as the idea of a self-sufficient island (labelled Lilypad) floating on water to house climate change refugees of up to 50,000 people and not only having zero emission, but also absorbing carbon dioxide by the greeneries planted all around itⁱⁱ. Others are more plausible experimentations with carbon-neutral cities such as Norman Foster's Masdar city that is being built, somewhat ironically, in the oil-rich Abu Dhabi. It is designed to be powered by the sun, free of cars and skyscrapers, and complete with full recycling and personal rapid transit, the 'podcar'.

These experiments signal a new conception of 'the city' as a giant laboratory. Every movement of the residents and every function of the city are monitored by intrusive remote sensing devices. Data is continuously collected, analysed and fed back to the drawing boards of the designers and engineers. It is the 'Big Brother' experiment at a large scale whose aim is to find out how people respond to de-carbonising urban engineering. Similar experiments are happening in other places such as Victorian Eco-Innovation Lab in Australia and Songdo Eco-city in South Korea. Another growing trend which aims to tackle similar environmental problems yet with different solutions is the formation of Transition Towns. Contrary to the expert-driven, high-tech urban labs of carbon-neutral city, these are grass-root-driven, low-tech, communal settlements. If the urban labs look into tomorrow's technologies for reducing the cities' ecological footprints, Transition Towns look into yesterday's practices for creating closed-cycle urban metabolism. Both treat the city as a bounded container and immune from wider spatial connections.

The art of possible

In an article on *Utopian Thoughts* Peter suggests that 'visions of utopia do matter' because without them 'it is difficult to believe that cities would look like they do now' (Hall, 1983:191). However, he makes a distinction between those visionaries 'who were good at understanding what was happening in the world ahead of ordinary mortals and harnessing these trends' and those who just let their 'fancies rove' (ibid). The first group

often succeeded in the realisation of their visions and left their mark on the urban landscape, for better or for worse, while the second group 'passed into limbo' (ibid). This may explain why we still see the landscapes of Howard, of Le Corbusier, and of Wright, but not the imprints of, for example, Soleri's Arcology (architectural ecology of self-sustaining mega-structures) or Doxiadis' Ecumenapolis (one giant world city where everyone lives)ⁱⁱⁱ. The same applies to the contemporary urban labs and Transition Towns because they are taking place on blank canvases and in isolation from the complexities of the urban relations. Even worse are the rhetoric-laden contemporary plans and their hollow promises of creating 'the most liveable', 'the most competitive, knowledge-economy' or 'the most sustainable' city. None of these are likely to offer a realistic vision of urban futures because they miss a key ingredient. This, in Peter's words, is 'a strong sense of the art of possible' and a 'powerful appreciation of the socio-economic framework' (Hall, 1983:194). He argues that, 'the story of planning is littered with the ruins of utopias that ignored this golden rule'. Furthermore, he reminds us that 'planning needs ideas' but it also needs the 'machinery' (Hall, 1972:184) to turn those ideas into practice.

Peter's own futurist perspectives are often grounded in observable trends and an appreciation of the context. They are often the projection of the present into the future rather than the portrayal of radically different futures in a distant time. This to some extent is the manifestation of his belief in empirical research and rootedness in evidence-based planning which at times is translated into systems based planning. However, keeping his feet on the ground is by no means an indication of a lack of long term visions. On the contrary, some of his writings present great leaps of imagination with, sometimes, an uncanny accuracy about the things to come. His most futuristic visions are often those related to technological advances even in social matters, as shown in the following excerpt from a 1987 article called *Britain 2013*. Having seemingly lost his hope in the conventional methods of education and training, Peter puts his faith in the hands of 'technical fixes' to resolve the problem of enduring poverty and exclusion.

We will have 'personal microphones inside our head' (to wake us up). 'Brain enhancers' from 'the local garage' (*for the time being we have to do with Omega3 tablets from the pharmacy*). 'People live where they like' (*only those who can exercise choice*) and 'commute a couple of times a week by maglev train' (*some do commute but not at a speed of 250 miles per hour*). 'Fares on maglev have been slashed.' (£200+, *Newcastle to London, same old trains*). By 2038, 'another generation of biodrugs and brain enhancers has either dulled the underclass into submission, or transformed them, too, into superpersons.' (Hall, 1987: 39-41; The words in brackets are added)

The politics of preferable

Peter's emphasis on the 'art of possible' is a reference to Alvin Toffler's famous trio. He suggests that, effective futurism calls for three ingredients: the science of determining the probable future, the art of delineating the possible futures, and the politics of defining the preferable futures (Toffler, 1970). Therefore, we need to complement Peter's golden rule with a third Tofflerian ingredient: the politics of preferable. We also need to paraphrase Peter's statement and add that the story of planning is littered with the ruins of utopias which were demolished by the vested interest of powerful players. Questions of who decides which alternative futures are preferable and for whom were less of a concern for some of the early visionaries. Implicitly, however, their visions reflected and reinforced the prevailing socio-economic system of their time and its politics of preferable. This may explain why in Peter's words:

'Corbusian landscapes are typical of centralised regimes where the state provides for citizens [...]. Wrightian landscapes [...] are typical of free enterprise, owner-occupier societies [...]. Howardian landscapes are more typical of mixed economies with social democratic governments' (Hall, 1983: 191).

In 'a highly speculative paper' which tries to 'forecast the quality of life in urban Europe' (Hall, 1973: 5) Peter suggests 'in co-operation with the public, the forecaster helps to shape the future' (ibid). The role of the public, however, is not to take part in shaping the future but to respond to the alternative futures produced by the forecaster. Contemporary spatial visioning activities are required to involve the public through deliberative processes in the horizon scanning and scenario building processes. Although such fairer processes do not necessarily lead to fairer outcomes, without them there is a danger that the ends justify any means. In his early works on urban futures Peter has focused mainly on the outcome rather than on the process. Even in his later work when for the first time governance is discussed his emphasis remains on the outcome. For example, in a diagram which depicts 'good governance' as 'an all-embracing concept', 'good' is defined mainly by government's objectives such as: sustainable urban economy, urban shelter, urban access, urban society, and urban life) and not by government's attributes such as: justice, fairness, transparency, legitimacy and accountability. The only exception is 'urban democracy' (Hall and Pfeifer, 2000b: 165).

3. Cities in the future

There are seven papers and a book which explicitly deal with urban futurism. Two are published in early 1970s (some written in the late 1960s), two in the 1980s, and the rest at the turn of the 21st century. I will elaborate on these in turn because chronology matters. What we see on the horizon often depends on our vantage point. Hall's visions of urban futures are often the products of their time. They are influenced by: historic circumstances, socio-economic contexts, his personal experience of visiting other countries^{iv} and being exposed to influential ideas of his contemporaries, as well as his generally optimistic perspective and Fabian (libertarian-left) view of the world. The themes that frequently run through the papers also demonstrate Peter's interest in demography, urban form, transportation, technology and economy.

The celebrated 1960s

Peter's early 1970's visions of urban future are upbeat and optimistic reflecting a pre-recession time in British urban history characterised by the booming economy; post-war political consensus; growing population, car ownership and consumption; full employment; immense optimism; and, great confidence in the ability of the state and the looming planning legislation (the 1968 Act) to build 'the planned conurbations' (Hall, 1972: 191) of the future. So, not only the context was promising, but also the new 'machinery of planning' (ibid: 184) was about to change planners' obsession with the 'traditional, static, rather immobile world' of the 1947 (ibid: 185). There was, however, a nagging obstacle: the absence of solid evidence base. Indeed, a recurring source of disappointment for Peter was British government's lack of investment in urban research. He argued that, 'if American planning suffers from a plethora research and no action, British Planning suffers from a surfeit of physical plans based on inadequate research data' (ibid: 184). This was true of the British planning academy as a whole. While by the early 1970s the American planning schools had embraced research and scholarship, their British counterparts were seriously lagging behind (Davoudi and Pendelbury, 2010). The following observation by an American academic in the 1950s was still largely true in the early 1970s:

'The (British) planner was taught to think physically, visually, technically. He still does. He was only crudely familiar, if at all, with the nature and use of research and scientific method. He knew little of the thinking or the applicability of social sciences.' (Rodwin, 1953 quoted in Davoudi and Pendelbury, 2010: 622)

Reacting to the 'old rigid master land use plans' (Hall, 1971: 179) of the 1947 Act and demonstrating his liberal views, Peter suggested that 'People –even members of the same family- can no longer be pigeon-holed so neatly' (Hall, 1972:192). He celebrated

the rising automobile-driven mobility which created spatial freedom so that people could choose where they wanted to live. People 'could have the choice of opting for what they most valued: nearness to transport (but higher densities), more garden space (but dependence on the car)' (ibid: 192). For this to happen, he argued that planners must make an 'intellectual jump': 'instead of *cordons sanitaires* of agricultural land many miles wide [...]' they should set 'the pieces of [...] new conurbations within a continuous country park'; and 'think of active *conversion* of ploughland to high density recreational use' (ibid: 192). This is an early indication of Peter's view on urban-rural relationship which has since continued to be more akin to Howardian attempt to combine the best of the town with the best the country, rather than Abercrombie's insistence that 'there should be no attempt at fusion between the two . . . town should be town and country should be country; urban and rural can never be interchangeable adjectives' (Abercrombie, 1933: 177). For Peter, however, 'any solution [...] which abolishes the absurd division in planning between town and country, is the right solution' (Hall, 1971: 178).

The troubled 1980s

Peter's 1980s' visions of Britain's urban future are set in a very different context from the previous decades. The economy is in recession, the country is being de-industrialised, large cities are losing population, unemployment is rising, riots are recurring scenes and symptomatic of inner city decline and social problems, the mixed-economy consensus is slipping away, and the New Right philosophy of privatisation, deregulation, shrunk welfare state and great suspicion of strategic planning is gathering pace. In short, Thatcherism is reigning.

In the two papers written at that time, Peter turns his attention to a future which was sufficiently distant from the troubled 1980s so that a beam of light could shine on the darkness of the immediate future. The first paper is a short article in *Geographical Magazine* (Hall, 1985) and focuses almost entirely on technology. It draws on Kondratieff's long wave and Schumpeter's creative destruction cycles of capitalism and links these to the new geographies of innovation. The paper reveals one of Peter's long standing professional and personal concerns: the problem of north-south divide in England. Persistent regional disparities have preoccupied Peter since his childhood emotionally, analytically and normatively. As he often reminds us in his writings and personal communications, research, including Peter's own, is yet to find satisfactory answers to the questions of why the divide and what can be done about it.

The second paper is an article in *New Society* (Hall, 1987). It draws a much broader picture of the future and speculates about a wider range of issues including: economy, technology, lifestyle, politics (with capital P), and society. Here, Peter leaves out his passion for facts and figures about demography, density, transportation and urban forms and lets his imagination fly. The result is a brilliant piece of futurist thinking that is beautifully crafted, vividly imagined, and powerfully articulated. Peter portrays the future with uncanny accuracy, as shown in the following excerpt. The only thing he gets wrong is the timing. He presents an image of the Britain of 2005 rather than the Britain of 2013, as the title of the article suggests.

'It is a grey Great Britain of 2013.' 'The good news is that economy is again booming.' 'Space mining and manufacturing' are happening. There is a 'New Democratic Alliance under Kinnock and Steel'. 'Sales of [...] the nominal membership of the House of Lords [...] provides useful government revenue'. 'We sell creativity to the world. Our genius lies in doing daft things'. '.. more people choose to live in small villages at increasing distance from the cities.' 'It's a good life.' But, 'there's the rub: [...] 30% of us are unemployed.' 'The underclass has segregated itself into racial and cultural ghettos.' (Hall, 1987: 39-41)

With his typical optimism, great sense of humour and poetic prose, Peter concludes the article with the images of an even more distant future stating that,

'The futurologists are busy predicting the Britain of 2038; a Britain more than one third richer, thanks to the boom of 2020s [...] the Britain of the orgiastic future, in which unbridled hedonism and saturnalia again reign' (Hall, 1987: 41).

From the 2013 vantage point it is difficult to see such a reassuring horizon at a time when Britain, like the rest of the western world, is: experiencing a deep recession, faced with rising social problems, and threatened by calamities of climate change. The early 2000s' party is over and it is time to pay for its social and environmental costs in the hope that the Britain of 2038 is a celebration of prosperity and wellbeing and not unfettered growth and hedonistic consumption.

The first urban century

Peter Hall's most substantive work on urban futures is his 363 pages-long book: *Urban Future 21* (Hall and Pfeifer, 2000a), which came out of the work undertaken over two years by a group of international experts (called the World Commission URBAN 21) and the Expert Group. The Commission was appointed by the German Federal Government

and moderated by Sir Peter Hall who, together with Ulrich Pfeifer of the Emperica Research Institute, provided an extensive background report to which individual experts, including Peter himself, contributed (BBR, 1999). The Commission's World Report (Hall and Pfeifer, 2000b) was submitted to the Global Conference on the Urban Future URBAN 21 (held in Berlin in July 2000 in the framework of the EXPO 2000 World Exhibition) and then published in a book format.

Urban Future 21 has four characteristics which make it distinct from Peter's earlier futures work: firstly, the book follows a more systematic approach to futurism and draws explicitly on scenario building techniques that had only been used by Peter previously in his *Europe 2000s* project (Hall, 1973). Secondly, it covers a wider geographical scale looking beyond Britain, Europe^v and North America and into the rapidly urbanising world of developing countries, notably the Pearl River Delta in Asia Pacific. Other regions of global south such as Africa and Middle East, however, remained outside his horizon. Thirdly, it deals with a broader thematic scope including not only Peter's longstanding interest in changes in demography, economy, technology, transport and urban form, but also new themes of sustainability and governance. Almost half of the book is dedicated to the latter, representing the fourth distinct feature of this work. For the first time, Peter explicitly combines future speculation with policy guidance, and futurology with good practice.

The work on the Book started in the late 1990s when many countries were recovering from the 1980s' sharp downturn in the global economy which was by then characterised as informational economy. The use of personal computers and telecommunication was widespread, the developing countries were rapidly urbanising and the emerging economies of countries such as China and India were becoming key players in the world's stage. The footprints of all these can be traced in *Urban Future 21*. More significantly, the book is influenced by two landmark events in the 1990s: one was the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the communist regime; the other was the publication of the Brundtland Report by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987). The former led to a growing claim about 'the end of history' and ideology (Fukuyama, 1992) and the triumph of the free market over socialist alternatives. The latter advocated a positive sum 'ecological modernisation' as a way forward for addressing unsustainable practices (Davoudi, 2012a).

Both seem to have reinforced Peter's and his co-author's pragmatic (some might say conservative) recommendations. One of their key messages is that, '... planning regulations tend to work best when they are consistent with market behaviour' (Hall and

Pfeifer, 2000b:289). Elsewhere, Peter also advises planners not to work against individual preferences and behaviours because he believes that, 'a moral imperative is no imperative at all unless it is accompanied by *real* imperatives, meaning physical or financial constraints' (Hall, 1997: 285 original emphasis). On the environmental issues, the position of *Urban Future 21* which follows Brundtland's is surprising because in a paper written in the 1990s, Peter acknowledges that environmental considerations cannot be dealt with without contestation. In fact, he argues that they are 'replacing the traditional lines of political cleavages between capital and labour', adding that, 'the new lines of divisions are between *wealth creation* ... and *environmental conservation*' (Hall, 1995:268 original emphasis); i.e. far from a win-win solution that is advocated by various shades of 'weak' sustainability.

Following a typical scenario building approach, the book firstly sets out the basic driving forces that would create opportunities and constraints for the world's city dwellers. It then presents two scenarios for 2025: the first one is 'Business as Usual', asking what cities will look like if the current trends continue unchecked. The second one is an alternative scenario based on 'Bending the Trends' and asking how the cities can change for the better if they act to change the trends. The Book then sets out a number of principles that can guide the cities in their attempt to achieve the above, proposing two key principles: sustainable urban development as key policy objective and decentralised local empowerment as the means of delivery. The last chapter of the book applies these principles in an action plan for the world cities (ibid: pp39-40).

4. Future of 'the city'

The preceding section dealt with Peter's work on the cities in the future. In this section, I discuss his work on the future of 'the city' as a phenomenon. Peter engages with this in four articles (Hall, 1984a; 1984b; 1999; 2003) that followed his keynote address in the First National Conference of Building Science Forum of Australia (Hall, 1982). The latest one has the most provocative title: *The end of the city? 'The report of my death was an exaggeration'* (Hall, 2003). They are all motivated by the then emerging claim about the end of cities. This was a time when researchers, particularly in America, were predicting a world of frictionless plain where people and businesses would be free to locate anywhere they wished; a time when geography did not matter; a time when telecommunication and marginal transaction cost would lead to 'the death of distance'. In his keynote address, Peter concentrates on population growth and decline in cities and presents a five-stage schema model of urban evolution, showing 'how, and why, the problems of urban areas in the developing countries are the precise reverse of those in

the developed lands' (Hall, 1982:9). He warns the delegate about 'a set of paradoxes' to come: continuing programmes of construction in the suburbs and the under-use of infrastructure and buildings 'in hearts of the cities' in advanced industrial cities (ibid). His most alarming message relates to developing countries where 'the new monster cities tend to sprawl' (ibid: 10) producing 'a growth of cities of poor people' (ibid: 6). Reflecting on the recession of the 1980s, Peter seems to call for the second wave of utopias that I mentioned in section two above. He suggests that,

'...the continuing urbanisation of the less developed world should now be engaging our earnest attention and our best abilities. For if we do not heed, the consequences – in social, human and finally political terms- could be dire.' (Hall, 1982: 11)

In the other papers, Peter responds to the claim about 'death of distance' by stressing the continuing and even increasing need for face-to-face contacts, despite or maybe because of telecommunications. In his typical sense of humour he stresses that, 'Anecdotaly, this paper was produced at home with the new technology, then put me on a 5000-mile journey to a conference in Vancouver' (Hall, 1984b:349). His point is that agglomeration forces continue to be relevant as 'the urban glue' (Hall, 2003: 142); that cities have a future; a point also made in a 1999 paper on the *Future Planning of City Region* and in response to Melvin Webber's 'non-place urban realm'. He stressed that, no matter how much people interact in the cyberspace they still 'identify with a particular place on the earth's surface' (Hall, 1999:68). Having confirmed that cities have a future, he advises against complacency and argues that, 'without positive intervention, British cities will continue to decline and perhaps even wither' (Hall, 1984a: 78). That is why he calls for 'imaginative efforts', the likes of which he had witnessed in 'a quick tour of six German cities'. Efforts such as: 'high quality public transport', pedestrianisation of city centres on an epic scale', and 'banishing' of 'car to all intents and purposes' are mentioned as exemplars of what we now call 'place making' efforts. These are the kind of practices that British cities began to do in the 1990s and are now in danger of being retreated. As public expenditure falls, so does the quality of places!

One point is worth mentioning here. Peter's engagement with the future of 'the city' is based largely on the modernist conception of the city as a physical container of population and functions rather than a relational view of the city as socially constructed and dependent on the social and cultural processes and substances that make it up (Davoudi and Strange, 2009; Davoudi, 2012b). So, in addressing the Australian delegates Peter urges

that, 'the most basic and important questions you can ask about cities' relate to things that can be measured notably, 'the degree of urbanisation'; the primacy index; and the extent of suburban decentralisation' (Hall, 1982: 8, original emphasis). There are, however, alternative conceptions of 'the city'. For example, some follow Shakespeare's idea that 'the people are the city'; that cities are expression of human spirit and ingenuity. Others consider the 'polis' as a social institution and a self-governing community, and a third group see cities as civilisation. The city as plural phenomena is all of this; it is simultaneously the conceived space of imagination, the perceived space of representation and the lived space of everyday practices (after Lefebvre, 1991).

5. The future?

Earlier in this chapter, I mentioned that the current foresight activities are markedly different from the early visionary idealism as many are motivated by imagining and creating the carbon-neutral urban futures. There is another more profound difference between the way in which time and future were understood then and the way they are understood today. The utopian visions of the early 20th century were largely based on the modernist over-confidence in the ability of Reason to pave the future and put societies on a linear path to progress (Davoudi, 2012b). Future was considered as an 'open future' (Leccardi, 2008) capable of being controlled through human choices and decisions that are made at present. This is now seen as over-ambitious and even misguided because scientific, technical and modelling advances- significant as they are- cannot eliminate risks and uncertainties. As Unger (2007) suggests, it is the ubiquity of change and its potential for novelty and surprise that characterise the concept of future time. This changing perception of the future reflects a paradigm shift in how scientists think about the world. Rather than seeing the world as orderly, mechanical and reasonably predictable, they see it as chaotic, complex, uncertain, and inherently unpredictable. The idea is that regime shifts are not necessarily the outcome of an *external* shock and its linear and proportional cause and effects. They can also happen because of *internal* stresses with no proportional or linear relationship between the cause and the effect. That, small scale changes can amplify and cascade into major shifts, while large interventions may have little or no effects. An alarming example of such complexity and feedbacks is the warming of the Arctic which is happening twice as fast as the rest of the planet (*The Economist*, 2012).

For urban futurists the message is that, 'past behaviour of the system is no longer a reliable predictor of future behaviour even when circumstances are similar' (Duit et al, 2010:367). In Peter's words, 'The world's great cities have fooled us before and will

doubtless do so again in the future' (Hall, 1984c: 350). What does all this mean for planners' conventional 'toolkits' which are based on forecasting the future by extrapolating past trends? Does it mean that in a world defined by a state of flux 'planning is condemned to solve yesterday's problems' (Taylor, 2005:157)? This may well be the case unless planners relax their traditional obsession with fixity, order and control, and allow for more flexibility and adaptability. This requires 'assuming change and explaining stability, instead of assuming stability and explaining change' (Folke et al 2010:352).

One of the lessons of the *evolutionary*- as opposed to engineering or ecological-resilience (see Davoudi, 2012c for definitions) for planning is that uncertainty carries the seeds of innovation and transformation. This means that 'successful planning' can turn a crisis into an opportunity if it uses what Peter calls 'utopia plus social realism' (Hall, 1987:192). If such opportunities are to be captured in the interest of the society at large rather than a minority of interests, then planners need to add to the mix a big dose of social justice which often requires challenging the status quo. Finally, we may not be able to predict the future but nothing stops us from imagining the future. Similarly, we may not be able to control the future but nothing stops us from carving out opportunities from past memories, present experiences and future aspirations all linked together not in a linear but in a cyclical way.

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ⁱ As depicted on the cover of *Cities of Tomorrow; a report* published by the European Commission, Directorate General for Regional Policy in October 2011 with contributions from Peter Hall

ⁱⁱ <http://www.environmentteam.com/2010/08/31/pictures-of-futuristic-cities/>

ⁱⁱⁱ It should be mentioned that Soleri's Arcology has a cult-like following and is being slowly materialised in Arcosanti in the Arizona desert and is proposed for Shimizu Pyramid City in Tokyo Bay. Also while Doxiadis' prophecy that one day we would all live in one giant world city proved to be more of a poetic vision, it does resonate with some contemporary realities, if we look at areas such as East Asia, where Beijing, Seoul, Tokyo (BeSeTo) urban corridor transcends national boundaries stretching, almost contiguously, along a 1500 kilometre strip of densely populated (98 million inhabitants) land within a maximum air travelling time of 90 minutes (Davoudi, 2003)

^{iv} Peter Hall visited for the first time Sweden in 1965, the United States in 1966 and Hong Kong in 1975 (Personal communication, Peter Hall Symposium, UCL, June 2012)

^v Peter engaged with the future of European cities substantially in his 1970s' work on *Europe 2000* which is the subject of another chapter in this volume and hence not mentioned in this chapter.